THE FAMILY

S N 121 59 .3 I. Introduction

Northwest China is heavily populated by national minorities. In the province of Sinkiang, the Chinese even form a minority group and the Turkic Moslems constitute the majority. Therefore, in a discussion of the family in this area, general statements applying to the population as a whole would not apply, but a distinction has to be made between several different ethnic elements.

For the purposes of the present section, the following rough division suggests itself: (a) Turkic sedentary Moslems; (b) Turkic nomadic Moslems; (c) the Dungans or Chinese Moslems; (d) the Tibetans; (e) the Mongours; (f) the Mongols, and (g) the Chinese. The last two groups are discussed in detail in their respective handbooks, the IMAR Handbook and the General Handbook of China.

S N 779 59 183 581 Among all Moslems Islam forms the ideal concept of the family. In Islamic society the institution of the family has always been one of primary importance. The family is considered the basic essential of human civilization. Having a family, and being a dutiful member of one, is not only regarded as necessary, but is expressly a religious obligation. Marriage, the step leading to the establishment of a family, is a sacred contract into which each Moslem must enter. A Moslem who, without just reason, does not marry and does not establish a family, is considered almost as a heretic.

S N [589] The family's function is primarily for reproduction of the group and the continuation of the family. The institution of the family, furthermore, provides security and peace of mind for its members. The family man is respected and esteemed in Moslem society; he is considered honorable and trustworthy. An unmarried man is likely to be looked upon with some suspicion and distrust.

S N 59 779 183 Since the family plays such a significant role in Moslem society, there is great emphasis on its unity and closeness. This is probably best expressed in the following quotation from the Koran, "...and Allah has made wives for you from yourselves and has given you sons and daughters from your wives." This closeness resulting from the blood relationship is extended to all other phases of family life.

S N 593 S N [829] Love and compassion should underlie all the relationships within the family. In relations between a man and his wife, or wives, between one kin to another, love is stressed as the basis. A man's behavior within his family reflects his attitude toward society as a whole. If there is love in his heart for his family, he will also have compassion for others and be of service to society.

S N 592 593 In the family, the man's position is always superior to that of the woman, regardless of his age. The wife is, accordingly, put in an inferior position to that of her husband, being under his control completely. The head of the house holds unquestioned authority

I: Washington S-4 (no date) 1956 AF13 Northwest China AF13

SOCIAL VALUES AND PATTERNS OF LIVING

I. Introduction

The Northwest region of China is a most complex subject with which to deal as far as its people, customs and social values are concerned. There has been little or no systematic research done in the past pertaining to the lives of the people in this region. The information available is mostly fragmentary, from writers whose interest was largely in the political, economic and geographic realms rather than in the cultural and social. Moreover, the few traveler-writers who exerted an effort to observe the cultural and social aspects of the people's lives described only those events in which they themselves had a chance to participate. For instance, data on dwellings, food and clothing are more readily available than data which might afford insight into social values. Birth, marriage and burial are more often recorded than other aspects of life routine which yield understanding of moral, legal and ethical concepts. Hence, there is no choice but to discuss social values and customs together in some instances and discard a rigid application of the two terms. As our definition of customs states that the term embraces all the norms classified as folkways and mores, and our definition of social values states that they are matters of convention invested with effect and meaning for all participants, it is permissible here, for the sake of convenience, to treat customs as social values and vice versa. It must be pointed out that when the social values of a group of people can be ascertained, the two entities are dealt with separately.

Because of lack of information, no uniformity in discussion can be achieved. However, an effort is made to give, in the beginning, a general picture of various people in this region, to bring forth similarities and differences in the various cultures which may help to throw some light on the understanding of the people in this region.

Although we have used the terms "social value" and "custom" here in a more flexible manner, it does not permit us to divert our attention beyond the definitions given for such terms. We have followed very closely the original meaning of the definitions except under certain conditions when such diversion was deemed necessary. As this is the case, it is necessary here to redefine the terms more fully.

Broadly speaking, "custom" is a term embracing all the norms classified as folkways and mores. It connotes an established usage which is contrasted with what is new. That is, a

121 custom is "the customary way of doing things." Specifically,
• 183 custom is an established norm practiced and repeated by a multitude of generations. It is closely associated with folkways and mores, but it designates the traditional, autonomic, mass character of both.

121 Social values are defined as modes of conduct regarded as
181 matters of common welfare by an effective consensus of the group, they are such matters as prove to be meaningful, systematic ideas, and become effectively invested principles which guide behavior. Above all, they are matters of convention invested with effect and meaning for all participants.

It should be pointed out that any value is a preference. We must bear in mind that cultural standardization defines and limits choices, and duration of values depends upon the prestige of values it carries.

II. The Region and the People

121
128 Prior to the discussion of the region and the people, it is necessary to call attention to the fact that the general discussion of this section and the following section cover only the pre-Republican period and the period of the Chinese Nationalist administration on the mainland of China. Knowledge of social change in this region under Communist control is lacking, and there is no reliable information pertaining to the true picture of living conditions there. According to Communist propaganda
* [668] there have been tremendous improvements in every aspect of the people's livelihood. These "improvements," however, do not necessarily bring about a basic change in habits, social customs or traditions. No conclusions can be ventured here.

121 In the Northwest region of China one finds Han Chinese, Chi-
* 563 nese Moslems, Turks, Mongols and Tibetans. People of different races, though living under identical geographical conditions, each group constructs its homes on the traditional pattern handed down by its ancestors. Each retains much of the old family traditions. The altered conditions called for by circumstances are mostly superficial.

For centuries the people in this area have been largely nomadic, i.e., the Mongols and Tibetans. Their life is simple and mobile; the tribesmen cling to tent living. Those who mix with
[199] the Han Chinese have assimilated some aspects of Chinese culture. For the most part the Han Chinese of the area are poor farmers or traveling merchants who carry on caravan trade. The Chinese Moslems in Chinghai and Sinkiang may be nomadic or sedentary; they cultivate land where the soil is fit for farming, or they move with the seasons to pasture for their animals. In Shensi, Kansu and Ninghsia, the Moslems who live among the

/Chinese Moslems (Dungans)/

within the railings in the mosque and read the Koran, wear white or green turbans, the leader's turban being more elaborate, with a tassel hanging down the back. Common people wear pointed octagonal caps of white, red or black, the color distinguishing the sect to which they belong.

Some women dress differently from the Chinese women, and wear a sort of turban hat. Ordinarily their dresses are in dark colors, but they may wear gay colors for festivals. According to ancient custom they must veil their faces in the presence of men, but this custom was abandoned long ago.

In cities and towns where the Chinese Moslems dress exactly like the Han Chinese, the men can be distinguished by their physical build and features, but the women are not easily recognized.

d. Occupation

Most Chinese Moslems are business men and traders, and most of them also farm. As farmers they are not equal to the Han Chinese, but they excel in dealing with cattle and everywhere they monopolize the beef and sheep trade. They are also merchants, bakers, workers in jade, money changers, and inn and restaurant keepers.

Outside a Moslem-owned restaurant there hangs a sign displaying a water pot surmounted by a dress hat, and two Chinese characters, Hui-hui. The pot signifies ceremonial cleanliness and guarantees that no pork is used. The hat indicates respect to customers. There are also two Chinese characters on the tea pot, meaning "Pure and True."

Formerly their religion forebade the Moslems to become money-lenders, barbers, fortune-tellers, actors, or servants or apprentices to the Chinese. How strictly the people now observe this taboo is not known.

3. Social values

a. Group spirit

The we-feeling is very strong among the Dungans. The whole group will sacrifice time and money for an individual oppressed by outsiders, and fight for him until justice prevails. Endowed with a courageous nature, the Moslem man is willing to sacrifice his life for the welfare of the group.

This spirit is shown by overt expression in daily social relationships. The Chinese title Lao-piao (old cousin) is applied even to a stranger of the same religious faith. The word old signifies respect; cousin signifies blood relationship. Hence Lao-piao indicates a feeling of closeness toward all members of the faith. Another expression of this feeling is found in the saying that "every Moslem in the world belongs to the same family."

b. Concept of charity

Many of the values in Chinese Moslem society are based upon

/Chinese Moslems (Dungans)/

S N 563 183 709 431 (651) religious teachings. According to the religious code it is obligatory for a man of means to contribute a certain amount of his wealth to public charity. Next to worship, this is the most important duty in Moslem society. The original idea of helping the poor and needy evolved into a tax (ten per cent on agricultural produce and two and one-half per cent on animals) collected from all believers for religious and public welfare purposes. Another form of alms, the sadaqa, is a voluntary offering. Public welfare supported by the tax, after the collector's fee is deducted, includes freeing slaves, assistance to persons who became indebted for good reason, making holy war to defend the people and the faith, and aiding needy travelers.

S N 563 796 735 During the month of Ramadan (fasting) donations and offerings are collected for public welfare purposes. The amount is not fixed, and the act of giving is voluntary. A sense of public responsibility is strong among these people. Not only do they give regular allowances to the needy in their own communities, but they help needy outsiders of their own faith.

S N 563 788 554 The Hajjis, or those who have completed the pilgrimage to Mecca, are highly respected in the Moslem community, and wear special badges to mark their distinction. The opportunity to journey to Mecca is the dream of all Moslems.

c. Virtue

S N 563 579 709 It is important for the individual to cultivate the true concept of peace and submission. The concept of peace involves such ideals as mutual cooperation and aid among mankind, mutual understanding among religions and peaceful co-existence of nations to achieve world brotherhood. The concept of submission means to submit oneself wholly to Allah and follow his teachings, sacrificing self-interest for the promotion of happiness for mankind.

S N 563 515 Personal cleanliness, both internal and external, is most important. Cleanliness in eating habits and personal hygiene is thought to develop a clean soul, free of evil thoughts and immoral conduct.

S N 563 186 d. Racial superiority

The Chinese Moslems regard themselves as a special group, superior to their Chinese neighbors. As students and officials, their attitude toward respect for the emperor and for Confucius has, in the past, been one of compromise. Compelled by law to conform, they excused themselves on the grounds that they did so outwardly but not in their hearts. The old and the new sects of Chinese Moslems, although bitterly hostile toward each other and at times engaged in armed conflict, on the whole present a (798) united front toward the Chinese and the rest of the world.

/Chinese, Chinese Moslems and Sedentary Tibetans/

423 and therefore land was abundant. Among the landowners there were quite a few with extremely large holdings. It is reported that the amount of farm and grazing land owned by a family was so big that it was not measured by acre or by any other unit but was simply estimated as reading from this mountain to that mountain, or from this river to that river. Thus these people's attitude toward land must have been different from that of the people in the coastal provinces. They certainly would not treasure their land so much as farmers of other places. This assumption is verified by the fact that the peasants in these areas would easily abandon their farms and migrate to other places whenever the farming business failed to produce an adequate livelihood. (556) Also, merely large landholdings would not necessarily make a person wealthy. It depends very much on whether or not there are irrigation facilities. Without such facilities, the land might mean nothing.

*563 578 Racial relations in the Northwest are very complicated. This complication influenced not only political and social affairs but also people's attitudes toward each other. Fan reports that in the province of Chinghai the Chinese and the Chinese-speaking Moslems all considered themselves civilized and thought of the Tibetans and Mongols as primitive tribes. Both the Chinese and the Chinese-speaking Moslems claimed that they were people from China Proper, chung-yüan. Between the Chinese and the Chinese-speaking Moslems in that province there was also much discrimination. The Chinese-speaking Moslems held all the key political, economic, and military positions and they were the predominant group while the Chinese either had no such positions or had only the secondary or insignificant ones. This discrimination had undoubtedly fostered a great deal of bitterness in the Chinese toward the Moslems.

*563 181 183 829 (674) About the Chinese-speaking Moslems in the district of Ho-chou, Kansu, Fan has this to say: The Chinese-speaking Moslems in Ho-chou are brave and disposed to fight or to make war. They praise warriors but look down upon literature. They have the characteristics of the ancient Spartan people. In their communities stealing and robbery are not things to be frowned upon, as long as they are not done to their own people. If a person left his community empty-handed and came back after a year or so with a big horse and many precious things he would certainly be lavishly praised by his relatives and neighbors as a hero or a worthy man. Nobody would care to ask how the man acquired his wealth. But if such a man came back without any gain and bore the mark of having been captured and punished for stealing or robbery, he would be exposed to humiliation. In order to express their warlike spirit and to train their people for fighting and bravery, the Chinese-speaking Moslems in Ho-chou have numerous

*563 181 526